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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 002376

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [IS](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: SENIOR MOD ADVISOR ON MILITARY COOPERATION,  
REGIONAL SECURITY

Classified By: ECPO Mincouns William R. Stewart per 1.4 (b).

¶1. (C) On November 17, visiting NEA/ELA Office Director Nicole Shampaine met with Assistant Minister of Defense MG Mohammed Al-Assar to discuss military cooperation and regional security. Shampaine encouraged Egypt to take advantage of a new American administration and Congress by exploring ways to enhance and broaden our bilateral security relationship. She also encouraged Egypt to establish a strong military relationship with Iraq. On potential conditioning of military assistance, she stressed the importance of combating arms smuggling along the Gaza border and demonstrating Egypt's support for addressing regional security threats. Al-Assar noted the success of the bilateral security relationship over the last 30 years, but agreed that the US and Egypt could "upgrade" the relationship to address regional security threats. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Shampaine thanked MOD for its support of U.S. efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, recent deployment of peace keepers to Sudan, military assistance to Lebanon, and overall support for peace and stability. She encouraged MOD to take advantage of the American political transition and the December bilateral Military Cooperation Committee (MCC) meeting in Washington to explore ways to strengthen and enhance our bilateral military cooperation. She also encouraged Egypt to build a strong military relationship with Iraq, including by sending a high-level military representative to the Egyptian Embassy in Baghdad once it reopens.

¶3. (C) Al-Assar commended the success of the bilateral relationship, noting the strong military assistance program, Egyptian support for U.S. military operations through the Suez Canal and overflights, and Egyptian contributions in Sudan, Lebanon, and Afghanistan. He agreed to explore opportunities to "upgrade" the security relationship to address regional security issues. Despite these many achievements, Al-Assar noted several areas of concern. He reiterated GOE opposition to Congressional conditioning of Foreign Military Financing (FMF), saying that military assistance to Egypt is a "success story" and should not become a political issue. He also expressed displeasure with the delay in releasing certain weapons systems to Egypt. Lastly, he acknowledged the importance of Israel to the U.S., but hoped that relationship would not negatively impact U.S. - Egyptian cooperation. He noted the recent increase in U.S. military assistance to Israel, adding that the increase contradicted the assistance formula established at Camp David.

¶4. (C) Shampaine responded that the increase in security assistance to Israel reflected Israeli specific security threats, including Iran, and did not reflect on Egypt's role in supporting a comprehensive peace. On conditioning, she noted that she could not predict what a new administration and Congress would pursue, but encouraged the GOE to be proactive in conveying Egypt's active support for regional peace and stability and combating arms smuggling along the Gaza border. She welcomed the November 13 Joint Military

Committee meeting between Egypt and Israel to discuss border security. Al-Assar noted that smuggling tunnels along the Gaza border posed a direct threat to Egyptian security, adding that since the beginning of 2008, 210 tunnel openings had been discovered.

15. (U) This cable has been cleared by Nicole Champagne.

SCOBAY

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End Cable Text